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New CAO taking helm

Scott Luey shifting over from
Wainfleet to become Port CAO
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Brakes applied to regional transit

Region puts halt to process leading to vote
for its involvement in inter-municipal transit
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Family swim



A mother and father Canada goose swim with their four recently hatched goslings Thursday in a pond located on a Wainfleet hobby farm.

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UPFRONT

■ **MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS:** Scott Luey to take reins following Bob Heil's retirement

Wainfleet CAO jumps ship to Port Colborne

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

Wainfleet chief administrative officer Scott Luey will soon be working for a different lakeside community.

When Port Colborne CAO Bob Heil retires at the end of the month, Luey will be taking the helm.

"It's bittersweet. It's definitely going to be difficult to leave," Luey said of his decision to depart from the township where he has worked in different roles since 1999.

"But it feels like a positive change."

Luey, who has been Wainfleet's CAO for the past seven years, gave his resignation to

council during an in-camera meeting Tuesday.

He'll begin his new role with Port Colborne on July 6, but must first begin the process to find his replacement.

A report will be brought forward to Wainfleet's May 26 council meeting outlining options for proceeding, including hiring internally, hiring externally or bringing in a consultant to review the structure of the township to see if there is room for improvement before the vacancy is filled, Luey said.

"It's a chance to look at

the organization and potentially move people around," he said.

"I think council wants to get this done right, not just fast."

After 42 years working with municipalities, Heil determined now is the right time to hang up his hat.

"I've had a very unique and diverse career," he said, running through a long list of communities he's worked for over the decades.

Heil has held numerous roles for various municipali-

ties, including clerk, treasurer, bylaw officer, property standards officer, planner, director of operations and superintendent of public works. He has been Port Colborne's CAO since 2008.

"There's a new council and it's my personal view that every now and then the senior manager needs to move to try and provide opportunity for the municipality to refresh," he said.

"It's a chance for the municipality to look for new opportunities, to see a new direction."

Heil has few plans for his retirement at this point, except hitting the golf course, continuing to volunteer in the community and auditioning for the lead in Garden City Productions' rendition of *Fiddler on the Roof* — a role he held in the recent Port Colborne Operatic Society production.

Luey acknowledged that he has "big shoes to fill" in replacing Heil, but believes he's up to the challenge.

Port Colborne Mayor John Maloney said both he and council are confident Luey

"has the combined experience and energetic leadership skills to continue ... to drive the city forward in all its current and future initiatives."

"Council and I are excited to welcome Scott to our team as he brings with him a wealth of knowledge, experience and leadership in municipal government."

Luey holds a certified general accountant designation and a bachelor of public administration degree from Ryerson University. He is currently completing his master's degree in business administration.

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■ **READINGS AT THE ROSELAWN:** Photos permanently on public display

Portraits paired with books at public library

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

A picture may be worth 1,000 words, but a collection of photos featuring talented Canadian authors is priceless.

Longtime Readings at the Roselawn host William Thomas, who retired in 2014 from the acclaimed authors series after a 20-year run, has loaned his photo collection spanning the two decades to Port Colborne Public Library.

Bibliophiles can now see portraits of 110 renowned authors lining the walls of the library's adult fiction and non-fiction rooms.

The black-and-white portraits were previously housed at Roselawn Centre, displayed prominently when the series was underway. But after each season, the photos, taken mainly by Weiland photographer Thies Bogner, were removed and put into storage.

Thomas hoped to see the collection displayed in a more public space year-round and a partnership with the library seemed only fitting.

"Now the authors are closer to the books they wrote," he said, while taking a first glimpse at the photos in their

new home.

"The library is a perfect place for the exhibit," Jennifer Parry, director of library services, said.

She commended Thomas for the "effort and commitment" he put into the authors series, which she feels is reflected through the new display.

"We are so happy to be a venue to help celebrate Bill's achievement."

Thomas founded the reading series more than two decades ago and has since been collecting photos of the many acclaimed authors who have spent time in the lakeside city.

Following retirement from his hosting duties, Thomas, a well-known author himself, has been focusing on his writing and plans to have his latest book out in the new year.

For more information on Thomas and his work, visit www.williamthomas.ca.

The Canadian Authors Series, as it is also known, continues in Port Colborne. For more information on future author appearances, visit www.thecanadianauthorsseries.ca.



MARYANNE FIRTH/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Author and longtime host of Readings at the Roselawn William Thomas has loaned his collection of portraits from the popular authors series to Port Colborne Public Library. Thomas is pictured with a small portion of the collection.

LOCAL NEWS

■ **EDUCATION:** Port Colborne student takes home gold at Skills Ontario competition

Student welds his way to nationals

FRANK IKEMAN
Postmedia Network

Eli Schonewille made sparks fly at the Skills Ontario welding competition.

The Grade 12 Port Colborne High School student left the May 5 competition with the gold medal, his second win from the all-Ontario contest.

The contest was to build a small structure based on a blueprint given at the start. The students had six hours to interpret the drawing and weld it into place.

"It was good. I like doing it,

like reading blueprints and stuff, I find it interesting, a challenge," said Schonewille.

He and his teacher, Vic Barker, estimate that Schonewille has logged about 500 hours of practice since September.

"Going into the competition I felt really prepared for it and I knew what I was going to be doing," said Schonewille.

Barker said that drive makes Schonewille easy to coach.

"I'm very proud of him, he's very coach-able, not afraid to put the hours in," said Barker.

"Since he started welding in

grade 9 he probably has 2000-3000 hours of practising and welding."

Schonewille is currently on a co-op term at school and spends half of his day at his placement at Barber Hymac Hydro Inc. He enjoys working and getting the experience. He's hoping to do either a linesman or millwright apprenticeship when he graduates.

"I like to build stuff, I like reading blueprints and building a project and all the different welds on it is a challenge right to make everything com-

pletely perfect," he said. "Vic has taught me a lot and being at my co-op placement has helped me a lot."

The win has qualified Schonewille to compete at the Skills Canada competition at the end of this month, where he will be defending a gold medal won from last year.

Schonewille and Barker are now busy getting ready for Skills Canada, which will be hosted in Saskatoon, Sask. on May 25.

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FRANK IKEMAN/POSTMEDIA NETWORK

Eli Schonewille works in his welding class at Port Colborne High on Monday in Port Colborne. Schonewille won the Skills Ontario welding competition on May 5, advancing him to Skills Canada in Saskatoon, May 25.

■ **MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS:** Report says not enough being spent

Councillors call for increased spending on roads

ROB HOULE
Postmedia Network

The state of our roads are bad for business—in more ways than one.

Poor roads are not only harsh on company fleets, they go a long way in turning off tourists, Niagara Falls Coun. Bob Gale said.

Gale made the comments during the tabling of a pavement condition and bridge appraisal status report at Niagara Region's public works committee meeting May 7.

Gale singled out the industrial tract of Port Weller on Lakeshore Rd. near the St. Catharines/Niagara-on-the-Lake border as one in which business owners avoid.

"You would not huy into that if you were truckers," Gale said, picking up on earlier comments from Niagara-on-the-Lake Coun. Gary Burroughs about the decrepit

state of Lakeshore Rd.

"Because you have to come down Lakeshore Rd., which is one of our worst roads, turn on Stewart Rd. to get to the highway ... you follow that road down and you're going through the roof of your car."

Gale said the same applies to a section of York Rd. near the Perfume Factory.

"If you're driving a tractor-trailer there, you're going through the roof on one hump. You don't notice it in a car, but every tractor-trailer notices," Gale said.

He said his daughter's fuel-tanker truck takes a beating in that area so drivers are advised to use alternate routes for deliveries.

Gale also said bad roads were a detriment to tourism. "Roads are tourism," Gale said.

"If you want to do a circle of Niagara, it's disgraceful," he said, describing a route down

Dominion Rd. in Fort Erie and Stanley Ave. or the Niagara Parkway in Niagara Falls and Lakeshore Rd. in Niagara-on-the-Lake into St. Catharines.

"We should be taking some money out of the investments we have ... or maybe some of our economic development can be put into our roads," Gale said.

The report notes \$250 million will be needed over the

next 10 years to maintain the government's 1,654 lane kilometers of paved roads, meaning a yearly average of \$16 million for reconstruction and \$9 million for resurfacing. The roads resurfacing allocation for 2015 is \$7 million, well short of the \$14 million the staff report says is needed to address the current backlog, a chart in the report giving the hypothetical scenario

of an unlimited roads budget would see \$101 million spent on road reconstruction in 2015 and \$14 million on resurfacing.

St. Catharines Coun. Bruce Timms called on fellow councillors to increase spending on roads.

"The council needs to consider shifting emphasis in budget considerations to roads and bridges, given that

our regional network is the arterial roads and the most directly related to prosperity," Timms said. "Good arterial roads are a very big consideration for businesses coming into our region and we can't afford to let them get too far deteriorated. They are, to me, a higher priority."

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Enough talk; we need action on poverty

GRANT LAFECHE
Postmedia Network

There comes a time when you have to stop debating.

Stop studying, arguing and planning. Regardless of the issue you are facing, sooner or later you will have to act.

Action is what's been lacking, though, in many respects when it comes to poverty in Niagara. We have lots of talk. We have studies and reports. We even have programs with varying degrees of success.

Yet nothing really seems to have improved. I have been covering poverty in Niagara since 1998, and not once has the local food bank or any other similar agency told me demand is trending downward.

Every year, it's the same thing — there may be shifts in the demographics of poverty, but demand for assistance continues to claw its way upward. The agencies tasked with aiding the poor are under continued pressure, having to do more with less.

Clearly, whatever we are doing isn't working.

I sat down Tuesday with Community Care CEO Betty-Lou Souter, and she expressed a similar frustration.

The problem, she said, is we keep trying to fix all the problems at once. Everything from minimum wage issues to shelters to job training.

The approach is well intended, but unfocused and fractured. As a result, progress is so incremental it can be hard to even identify.

Rather than try to fix everything at once, Souter suggests a novel idea.

"Pick one issue or two, and resolve those. Fix those, and move on to the next one," she said.

From her point of view, affordable housing is a good place to start.

Souter points out many people living in poverty spend 50% to 75% of their income on housing. What's left goes to food, and if they are lucky, utilities. That leaves next to nothing for education or job training or anything that might allow them to build better lives.

And so nothing changes.

Current waiting lists for affordable housing in Niagara can be as long as a decade,

which gives you some sense as to how dire the situation is.

Things being as they are, however, Souter suggested our best bet is to start tackling the housing issue locally, that is, in St. Catharines.

It actually might make more sense to act regionally, with the strength of all 12 Niagara municipalities. But if regional council has demonstrated anything, it is a lack of political will to act.

The issue of regional transit is instructive. We've long known an effective public transit system in Niagara to move people to jobs around the region is a key factor in combating poverty. But we've never really had anything beyond an anemic pilot project that seemed designed to fail — but at least there was something to build upon.

Not any more. A committee of regional council, infamous for its narcissistic rush to vote itself a pay raise weeks after taking office, shut down the notion of region-wide transit this week.

If that isn't enough to make you want to yawn from the rooftops, that move might also have a deleterious effect on the push to bring GO Rail to Niagara.

The business plan for GO presented by regional council to Queen's Park includes as a key feature a regional transit system — which the braintrust on council appear poised to all but murder in the cradle.

(The full council still has to approve the committee's decision and redesign itself, but that seems unlikely to happen.)

If we wait for the region to act, we'll be waiting forever.

So Souter suggests corporate and municipal partnerships are the way to go.

Find developers who will build affordable housing units. City hall can reduce or waive development fees and when the units are built, the city, working with local agencies, ensures residents have the active support they need to access services to help them move on.

Improving access to affordable housing is but one piece of the poverty puzzle. But it is a place to start.

We don't need more studies to tackle poverty. We don't need more talk. We need action.

It needs to start now.

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Shipwrecks — Grenville

SKIP GILLHAM
For Postmedia Network

The former Canadian Coast Guard vessel *Grenville* was built at Toronto in 1912 and served as a lighthouse and buoy tender until it was wrecked late in 1968.

The 50.14-metre-long ship was initially assigned to the region between Prescott and Niagara-on-the-Lake but was known elsewhere on the Great Lakes.

The ship was docked at Toronto when rammed by a tug in 1915 and it stranded in a snowstorm near the entrance to Byng Inlet, Georgian Bay, on Nov. 22, 1924. The hull was not refloated until the following May and had to spend a period of time at Collingwood undergoing repairs.

In 1945, this was the first Canadian civilian ship to be equipped with newly invented radar and later, on Nov. 22, 1957, this was the first ship to test recently completed Iniquity Lock.

Grenville was finishing up the 1968 season when it got caught in an ice flow and rammed against the St. Louis Bridge in the St. Lawrence Seaway. The ship was pinned



Grenville is pictured in Cornwall in April 1968, in this photo by Rene Beauchamp.

against the structure and the crew simply stepped to the safety of the bridge from their heavily damaged vessel.

The aging government tender spent the winter on the bottom and lost its stack, masts and pilothouse in the battle with nature.

Come spring, what was left of the *Grenville* was refloated, towed to Sorel, Que., and broken up for scrap.

SUPPLIED PHOTO

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■ EDUCATION: Public board following a directive from Queen's Park to all Ontario boards

DSBN wants community input on school-closing policy

DON FRASER
Postmedia Network

District School Board of Niagara wants your comments on a new policy for school closure reviews.

Draft accommodation review guidelines were

approved by the board Tuesday night. It's part of a provincial directive to all Ontario boards to revise their accommodation review process.

Those are the steps which must be followed before a school board can decide to close a school.

The Education Ministry feels the existing system has been too acrimonious, takes too long and is not reflective of municipalities' concerns.

Those revised "pupil accommodation review guidelines" — to be incorporated by draft DSBN rules and

incorporating public input — must include more emphasis on student achievement, and less on the impact of a shutdown to the community.

Extra pre-planning by the board before a re-org begins is also required, and there must be involvement with affected municipal governments.

According to a DSBN program and planning committee report received Tuesday,

when an accommodation review on a school is started, affected municipalities will now be contacted within five days to start discussions.

New rules also mean a much shorter ARC timeline, to three months from six.

The Niagara board has closed 21 elementary schools and built three new ones since 2007, all following sometimes bitter ARC meetings and angry public delegations to

the board.

School closures are usually prompted by tumbling or unsustainable enrolment at affected sites, typically older schools that are costly to maintain. Consolidations to other schools, or new builds follow.

Currently, three public schools are under construction by DSBN — Twenty Valley, Harriet Tubman and a Ridgeway school.

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Politicians hit brake on regional bus plan

ROB HOULE
Postmedia Network

A Niagara Region committee's decision to not take a necessary step toward an inter-municipal transit system is a disappointment to one of its biggest backers.

Former regional councillor Debbie Zimmermann called it a "historic moment" when the region's public works committee voted in September to remove the words "pilot project" from an inter-municipal system and to build toward a permanent one.

For the region to start up such a system requires a so-called tripartite majority — a majority of those on council, and a majority of local councils (seven of 12) that represent a majority of eligible voters.

On May 7, the region's committee-of-the-whole put the brakes on

staff working toward getting that tripartite majority, with a motion by Port Colborne Council. David Barrick.

His plan puts the initiative on hold in favour of asking the municipalities of Welland, St. Catharines and Niagara Falls and their transit commissions to work together on a new model of serving other municipalities.

"Disappointing, holy Hannah!" Zimmermann said last Monday afternoon.

"The fundamental debate here has been we've been engaging people to support getting GO Transit (train), but how do we do that when we don't have a seamless system?"

The region has been funding inter-municipal transit under a pilot project started in 2011.

In it, grants are provided to Niagara's three main transit operators — St. Catharines Transit, Niagara Falls

Transit, Welland Transit — to provide the service.

The pilot was to last three years, but was extended to September.

A report to council May 7 showed a mapped out strategy staff was prepared to undertake to get the tripartite majority.

The strategy included two presentations to each of Niagara's 12 communities. The first would give an overview of inter-municipal transit and get feedback on what a bylaw creating the service should include. The second meeting would be to present the bylaw developed with their input and to ask for support.

But approval of Barrick's motion put that on hold.

He and Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati said they favoured the connectivity models currently in place with certain municipalities — Port Colborne pays Welland Transit

HOW THEY VOTED

In favour of Barrick's motion:
Diodati, Gae, Maves, Volpatti, Maloney, Barrick, Edgar, Hett, Petrowski, Macgregor, Jeffs, Campion, Cadin.

Opposed: Annunziata, Benkley, Quirk, Easton, Hodgson, Burroughs, Timms, Luciani, D'Angela, Grenier, Marshall, Joyner.

Absent: Redekop, Darte, Rigby, Augustus, Bedy, Szendzik.

to run a bus to Port, while Port Erie is connected to Niagara Falls by that town's transit system and Thorold is serviced under an agreement with St. Catharines Transit.

Diodati said he and the mayors of Welland and St. Catharines and their transit commissions have had ongoing, informal discussions for years about providing service to outlying municipalities.

"The idea we had discussed was rather than forcing transit and forcing (municipalities) to pay for a service that maybe they don't want or can't afford, that we would do it as a service that you pay for," Diodati said, using Grimsby as an example that could be serviced by St. Catharines Transit.

He said that model can be employed as "the system grows and matures into a full system."

"Eventually ... one day this will become one great big system. It's a big geography and not enough demography and until it all comes together, that's in the future. But until that time, I think it's a natural way."

"We're not talking about eliminating regional service ... we're just saying it's a different approach ... the communities that want it can pay."

Diodati said the tripartite majority is "never going to happen. So that's just a waste of time and waste of energy."

While hopeful Barrick's motion will be rejected at this week's regional council meeting, Zimmermann said a single fare system is

integral to moving people around Niagara.

"To abandon a single-fare box is just silly, at this stage," she said. "A single-fare box is what makes it easy for people to travel throughout the region."

Niagara Falls Coun. Bert Mares and Andy Petrowski of St. Catharines called the pilot program a failed experiment.

In response to a question from Petrowski, transportation systems and planning manager Kumar Rajan said regional transit system buses have had an average ridership of four people on 32-seat buses, excluding post-secondary students.

Zimmermann remains convinced ridership would increase with a unified system.

"It's proven a lack of system," he said.

"The growth in that link, that hub, it needs the spokes and the spokes aren't feeding into the hub. And that's the big problem. We don't have that consistency of fare box from one municipality to the other."

St. Catharines Coun. Bruce Timms said he was against the motion because it was unexpected.

"The motion ... is contrary to the intention of the meeting," he said. "Very often, I complain that we have a meeting to receive a report and a drastic action is pushed our way."

"This time, maybe it's an appropriate motion for three weeks from now so the entire council is aware that that's the question on the floor."

"I have supported this regional transit all the way through, from the point of view of economic development, for the key to getting to work, for the low-income being able to get to city to city, from job to job. Also because I believe it is important to the argument for GO rail to Niagara."

Earlier, in response to a question from Niagara Falls Coun. Selina Volpatti, Chair Alan Cuslin and public works commissioner Ron Tripp said no one at the province has supported an inter-municipal transit system is necessary to get regular GO train service to Niagara.

Propagation Ban and Sampling of Plants Susceptible to Plum Pox Virus

Between May and October 2015, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) will be inspecting selected rural and residential properties in the Niagara Region, to sample susceptible trees for the Plum Pox Virus and/or to verify compliance with the propagation ban that is in place. This means that property owners may see CFIA inspectors on their property.

The Niagara Region is currently under federal quarantine. Regulations are in place to prevent the spread of plum pox virus outside of the quarantine area. Plum Pox Virus is a serious plant disease that threatens Canada's stone fruit industry. It does not affect human or animal health.

Plants that are susceptible to the virus include apricot, nectarine, peach and, plum trees, and some ornamental shrubs such as purpleleaf sandcherry.

A ban on propagation is in place. This ban prohibits anyone in the Niagara quarantine area from producing trees and plants that are susceptible to the virus. This includes producing trees and plants from seed, cuttings, grafting or any other method.

For a listing of the regulated plants and more information about the regulated area, please contact the CFIA at:

905-938-5060 or www.inspection.gc.ca



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■ NIAGARA REGION

Chair says MPP should have done GO 'homework'

ROB HOULE
Postmedia Network

Niagara Region's chair has become a firefighter, metaphorically speaking.

Alan Caslin had to douse two political fires in recent days, both regarding public transportation.

The first was started by Arthur Potts, MPP for Beaches-East York and the parliament-

tary assistant to Ontario's minister of agriculture, food and rural affairs, who during an address at the Ontario Wine Awards in Niagara-on-the-Lake Friday declared daily GO train expansion to Niagara Falls was not high on the government's priority list.

"He was at the microphone... he was there representing the ministry and the premier... and

he said he was there for that reason," Caslin said Wednesday.

"(Niagara-on-the-Lake) Lord Mayor Pat Darte had just finished speaking about what they were doing in Niagara-on-the-Lake and that they were looking forward to the announcement that GO train was coming to Niagara Falls, as a promotional opportunity for Niagara-on-the-Lake wine tours... promoting

the whole industry.

"Arthur was the next one to speak and he said, 'I know what the mayor just said, but frankly GO transit to Niagara is not high on our priorities at this time.'"

Caslin said his jaw dropped. He said he approached Potts after the speech to introduce himself and ask Potts to reaffirm what he had just said regarding GO, which Caslin said Potts did.

"Quite frankly, the problem is that Arthur Potts is not in tune with the state of the situation and probably didn't even know we had prepared and submitted a business case to (Transporta-

tion Minister Steven) Del Duca," Caslin said.

A group from Niagara, including Caslin, recently met with Del Duca to present to the Region's business case for extending daily GO rail service to Niagara Falls.

In a news release following that meeting April 28, Del Duca said officials would give the business case a thorough going-

over.

Potts retracted his comment in an e-mail sent to the chair's office Monday with the expectation it would be shared with the media.

"My comments on Friday did not accurately reflect the government's position on GO Transit expansion to Niagara," Potts wrote.

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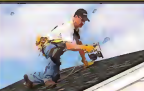
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■ HEALTH CARE

Council considers needs study at request of Save Welland Hospital group

Committee urges councillors to continue leadership on hospital fight

ALLAN BENNER
Postmedia Network

Welland is considering developing a community needs assessment for hospital services, after a presentation by members of the Save the Welland Hospital committee.

Members were at city council this week asking the city to reaffirm its opposition to the planned closure of the Welland hospital, to continue to work toward preserving services within the hospital, and to lobby Ontario's premier and health minister to reverse the decision to close the Welland hospital.

"They also asked council to commission 'an independent evidence-based study to assess the present and projected hospital services requirements of residents in the catchment area of the Welland General Hospital'."

"Our leadership on this issue is very important," said committee co-chair Sue Hotte, who also leads the Niagara Health Coalition.

"Working together, we can reach our common goal of saving the Welland hospital."

Ward 1 Coun. Mann Grimaldi amended the motion to receive the

committee's presentation, and refer it to the city's health care committee for a report on implementing the requests.

"Rest assured that council and the health care committee are working diligently alongside you for the same goal," Grimaldi told the Save the Welland Hospital committee members.

Ward 4 Coun. Pat Chiochio said a few "major concerns" identified by the committee members include transportation and the impact on emergency medical services, as well as extended care services.

"There are about a thousand people waiting to be admitted to long-term care homes. I think there's close to 500 just in this community alone," he said.

In an interview, Mayor Frank Campbell said the city has previously considered commissioning the report the committee members requested.

"But there are costs associated with that," he added. "We need to discuss how it would happen, the costs, how long it takes and see if other municipalities are interested in participating."

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■ FAIR TRADE

Fair trade movement continues to grow in Port

MARYANNE FIRTH
Postmedia Network

It's been picking up steam in Port Colborne.

Since the lakeside city was designated Ontario's first Fair Trade Town in 2009, the social movement has continued to grow locally.

More and more businesses have gotten on board to offer fair trade products — the result of a group of dedicated volunteers working behind the scenes to spread word of the initiative.

That group, Port Colborne's fair trade committee, has again thrust the topic into the spotlight in celebration of May as Fair Trade Month.

Committee members held a flag raising ceremony earlier this week in front of city hall, gave a presentation outlining their past accomplishments to city council and have organized a Fair Trade Soliree to give the community a taste of what the cause is all about.

"There's an atmosphere of interest in town," said Jane Nigh, who runs the city's longstanding Ten Thousand Villages store — a nonprofit fair trade organization that markets handicrafted products made by artisans in more than 35 countries.

She noticed it when the fair trade movement began gaining traction in

the city about seven years ago, and continues to see today.

Port Colborne remains Niagara's only Fair Trade Town, with not only the city itself but 15 restaurants, stores and other businesses on board with the initiative.

To qualify as a partner, businesses must sell a minimum of two fair trade products.

Most recently, JB Fashions joined the ranks by introducing fair trade clothing and jewelry lines.

To introduce a variety of fair trade products to the community, the committee will host its annual Fair Trade Soliree Friday, May 22.

The event, being held at Roselawn Centre, gets underway at 7:30 p.m., with the Deacons of Jazz taking the stage at 8. A variety of fair trade goodies will be available.

Kevin Hamilton of Shared Harvest will give a presentation on the community vegetable farm, which has made it its mission to provide families with organic produce that is environmentally sustainable, locally desirable and socially responsible.

Tickets for the soliree are \$20 and available at Ten Thousand Villages, 7 Clarence St. in Port Colborne.

maryanne.firth@summedia.ca
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■ **ARTS: Niagara Integrated Film Festival**

Local talent to shine again at NIFF

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

Niagara filmmakers will once again share the spotlight at the second annual Niagara Integrated Film Festival.

Niagara Rises, a series catering to locally-themed movies, will return when the four-day festival kicks off June 18. Four features, along with a series of short films, will take place at Landmark Cinemas (Pen Centre) in St. Catharines and the Seneca Centre Theatre in downtown Niagara Falls.

"There's a wealth of incredible talent in the region, it's really unbelievable," says programmer Kate Yorga. "Part of our festival mandate is to celebrate that talent."

The mandate this year not only encompasses Niagara-born filmmakers, but movies made in the region. It opens the door to both indie and big budget features at the festival.

"There was a great wealth to choose from this year," says Yorga. "Even the shorts too, it was great to have an embarrassment of riches to choose from."

This year's slate of features:

THE HOTEL DIEU

A troubled teen comes to terms with blindness following a drink-driving accident in this drama from St. Catharines production house FourGrounds Media.

LOST PENNY

Pseudo-horror flick shot in St. Catharines about a young girl who resorts to black magic to find her long-lost father. Stars Rachel McQueen of *The Amazing Spider-Man 2*.

THE COLOSSAL FAILURE OF THE MODERN RELATIONSHIP

Filmed throughout the region, this romantic drama finds a woman (Krista Bridges) breaking off an affair with her husband's boss (David Cubitt) to repair her marriage with a trip to wine country.

THE COCKSURE LADS MOVIE

Music-based comedy produced by Niagara's Darren Portelli and former Mox Frouvous member Murray Foster, about a British bar band looking for their big break while going through a split in Toronto.

The festival is expected to release its final schedule of screenings next week.

The local component to last year's inaugural festival made bringing Niagara Rises back an easy decision, says Yorga.

"It was huge," she says. "People were really excited to see their hometown talent. For people to see physical proof of the great talent that's in their own back yard ... that's why there's again excitement about it this year."

This year's Niagara Integrated Film Festival will once again utilize local wineries and restaurants in addition to theatres. Films will be announced at a news conference at Jackson-Triggs Winery May 20.



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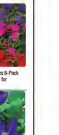
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Physician urges co-operation among municipalities

ALLAN BENNER
Postmedia Network

There are two underlying prob-

lems that need to be overcome before Niagara can have "a good health care system," said Dr. Thomas Estall.

"One is cooperation between the 12 municipalities, and the second is involvement of the medical profession," Estall told members of

Welland's health care committee this week.

Estall, who has spent the past two years researching the delivery of hospital services in Niagara, said past hospital restructuring projects have resulted in "a lot of animosity, a lot of fear amongst the population."

For example, he asked committee members to consider a 22 year old single mother of two.

"No job, no welfare, no family, no friends, no car, two kids. One of them gets sick at 3 a.m., and ends up being taken by ambulance on a 45 minute drive from Port Erie to the only place where they admit pediatric cases. They don't have a Ronald McDonald House next door to the new hospital. There is no regional public trust. Chances are that mother is not going to see that child during the course of that child's stay in the hospital unless someone intervenes," Estall said. "If I was this single mother, I don't think I would be supportive of this new Niagara Health System."

But there is an opportunity now to improve services for the future, added Estall, who moved to Jordan two years ago after retiring from 40 years as a physician — including a decade as director of emergency medicine at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto.

"It's a relatively small window, but there is an opportunity to overcome all of the problems that have been created during the last 10 or 15 years, and create a model that will really impress the rest of the province," he said.

Even if two urgent care centres are the closest thing to a hospital south Niagara can hope for, Estall said "we can still do a remarkable job if we are allowed to plan it."

"There are some really exciting possibilities," he said. "An urgent care centre doesn't come with a definition. You could make it just about anything you want short of keeping people over as admitted patients. You can do same day surgery, you can do low risk obstetrics. You can do all sorts of things to serve the residents of the southern tier without calling yourself a hospital. It just requires planning."

But that planning, he added, must be done by the communities themselves at the grassroots level.

"Don't import someone from KPMG for I don't even want to think about how many hundreds of thousands of dollars, to come in from scratch completely different and plan it," Estall advised. "That's the way provincial governments have been planning their health care system for a long time."

Instead, Estall said a committee of mayors and primary care physicians from each of Niagara's 12 municipalities should meet quarterly with NHS trustees to work towards developing plans for improved health care services in the region.

"There is a bit of urgency about it because if it isn't planned by the region, someone is going to impose a plan again on the region and you're going to be stuck with it," he said.

NHS spokesman Brady Wood said health system management would welcome a meeting with Estall to learn more about his idea.

"It's definitely a priority for us to involve folks," Wood said.

Meanwhile, he said NHS president Dr. Suzanne Johnston has already taken a lead role, actively working with elected officials.

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MUSIC

Welland singer joins Rob Ford on cancer single

JOHN LAW
Postmedia Network

Welland-born singer Alexa Muir shares the spotlight with 11 other singers for the new song *Not My Time*.

One of the other singers happens to be former Toronto mayor Rob Ford.

The single, to be released June 22, will donate part of its digital sales to the Canadian Cancer Society. Ford did not seek re-election as mayor in the last municipal election after doctors discovered a cancerous tumour in his abdomen. He underwent successful surgery May 11.

He contributed the last line of the song, simply saying "It's not my time." A video featuring Ford was released May 6 on YouTube.

Handling the majority of vocals are singers from the Spectra Talent Contest, offered by the Rainbow Association of Canadian Artists (RACA) which celebrates diversity in music. The Toronto-based group offers singers of any ethnic or cultural background access to songwriting clinics, professional development and group recordings.

"I tried out for the competition, got into it, and then this amazing opportunity came up within it," says Muir. "It's better than I could have imagined it to be."

The song is written by RACA executive director Ralph Hamelmann, who's mother was diagnosed with cancer two years ago.

"Even though her surgery was extremely aggressive, she fought for her life and beat the odds," said Hamelmann in a statement. "I wanted to write a song that would inspire others in her situation and put RACA's indie singers in the spotlight."

Muir wasn't surprised Ford made an appearance on the song.

"We had talked about it for a little while," she says. "He's also suffering from the same disease this is going to support, so it makes sense to me that he's in the song."

She isn't worried the beleaguered former mayor detracts from the song. In fact, word of his involvement has generated national media attention.

"It's a Toronto-based talent competition and it does have to do with battling cancer, which Rob Ford is," she says. "I think it makes sense."

In a statement, Ford urges listeners "to put their politics aside and stand behind the causes this song represents."

The song is available for pre-order for \$3.49 at www.notmytime.ca. The single will include three versions of the song — a radio edit (with Ford), a Spectra edit (minus Ford) and the backing track.

Muir moved to Toronto four years ago to get her business degree from Ryerson University while singing on the side. Now, singing is her full-time pursuit.

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■ DRONES

Niagara police put aerial device to work

JOHN LAW

Postmedia Network

Niagara Regional Police have a new eye in the sky.

Since January, the forensic

services unit has been using a new 'Unmanned Aerial Vehicle' for operations as part of a one-year pilot project.

The \$1,500 red and white

unit — which no one called a drone during a May 12 media conference — has a range of 750 metres and 25 minutes of flight time. It's equipped with

a 14-megapixel camera mounted on a three-way gimbal, and is GPS operated.

Det. Const. Jeff Inch says the unit enables police a better vantage point for collisions, crime scenes and large events. It will also be beneficial for missing persons and search and rescues.

"We've used it for some major investigations already," he says. "You get a bird's-eye view. What normally on the ground would take 10 or 15 photographs ... usually one or two photos (in the air) puts it all in perspective."

Under Transport Canada legislation, the unit's range can only be 250 metres within its operator, and has a 30-metre height limit.

It's an ideal device for gorge rescues,

says Inch.

"People get stuck, call their cell-phone, and (say) 'This is where I went down, can you help me?' Something like this, we can fly over the edge of the gorge, go down, find out exactly where they are, and direct officers to them."

Inch assures the public the device won't be used for spying or intruding on their privacy.

"There are no plans to use it for anything like that," he says. "Right now it's in the forensic services unit, and we use it for aiding investigations. Getting a different perspective."

Both the OPP and RCMP have their own UAV units.

Inch says at the end of the one-year term, police will reassess whether additional units are needed.

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Niagara Regional Police Detective Constable Jeff Inch tries out the new 'Unmanned Aerial Vehicle' on May 12 in Thorold. The Forensic Services Unit has been using the new equipment as part of a one-year pilot project.

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■ TOP TELECOMMUNICATOR

Police dispatcher gets call of good news — she's an award winner

FRANKI IKEMAN
Postmedia Network

The word is out — Beth Kierstead is the Niagara Regional Police emergency telecommunicator of the year. Kierstead has been with the service since 1992, when she moved to Niagara to join the Green Ribbon Task Force that eventually arrested serial killer Paul Bernardo.

At the end of that investigation, Kierstead went on to work with other units at the NRP and in 2001 joined the communications unit where she has worked since as part of the 62-member dispatching team.

"It's a type of job like no other job. You'll never go to work knowing what you'll be doing, because it changes constantly with every call that you take... It could be a very routine call, and the next call you take could be a life and death call."

"So it's not a dull job," she said.

Dispatchers in the communications office are the primary answering point for 911 calls. In 2014, the office received 143,128 of them.

As a member of the communications team, Kierstead takes both

emergency and non-emergency calls. She described her work as a challenge, but one of the best jobs she's ever done.

As she approaches retirement in the next few years, she said, it's going to be tough to leave a team of people she has worked so closely with over the years.

"It's going to be hard to leave this type of work, because it's family," said Kierstead, "You work 12-hour shifts with a group of people, they're like family to you."

Kierstead was recognized for her commitment to the communications unit. She was nominated by her peers for the award for her dedication to public safety, professionalism and positive attitude.

NRP spokesman Const. Phil Gavin said the job of the emergency telecommunicator is often underappreciated by people outside the service. He said the work they do is linked to the success of the agency and the safety of the officers.

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■ KIDNEY TRANSPLANT

A gift for someone else's son

CHERYL CLOCK
Postmedia Network

It was supposed to be a gift of life for her child. Her left kidney. A perfect match and a chance for her 19-year-old son to get off the leash of dialysis and have the healthy life he deserved.

But it wasn't to be. Three days before the transplant, David MacKinnon had a stroke. He died June 8, 2011, on what was to be the day his mother, Michelle, would have given him a kidney.

And in that moment, under the weight of a mother's grief, Michelle turned to David's doctor and made a promise: "You find me a person who deserves this kidney as much as David did, and I'll donate it."

On Wednesday at 8 a.m., she kept that promise. In an operation at the Toronto General Hospital, Michelle, 46, gave that left kidney to a young boy. A boy she does not know, whom she has met only twice, but whose mother made an emotional plea on Facebook that ended up at the top of Michelle's news feed in March.

The boy's parents can't donate

and cried some more.

On the night, she sent the mother a text.

She explained how she had already gone through the array of tests for her son and that maybe, she would be a match for the young boy.

Turns out, she was. After a slew of bloodwork and other tests, and meetings with people that included a social worker and psychiatrist to ensure her emotional wellness, the transplant date was set for Wednesday, May 13.

Michelle's kidney was removed during a three-hour-plus surgery, then transported to another hospital where the boy was ready and waiting. Typically, a donated kidney is placed in a person's pelvis where there is more room.

"David deserved to have a good life," says Michelle. "And I honestly believe that my kidney would have worked for a long time."

"Maybe that's a mother's instinct or wishful thinking. But that didn't happen... It was out short unexpectedly."

"So this isn't for me, and it's not David that I'm helping now, but I'm finishing what I started with David. For another family."

David had been sick all his life. Doctors could not give it a name, but in simple terms there

KIDNEY DONATION

Living kidney donation (Canada Blood Services): blood.ca/en/organ-tissues/living-kidney-donation
Be a donor (Trillium Gift of Life Network): giftlifeline.on.ca/en

were tiny holes throughout David's body. In his upper gastrointestinal tract. Ender.

In June 2010, when David was 17 years old, he was in renal failure. His parents, Michelle and Dave of Niagara Falls, were told he needed dialysis to take over what his kidneys could no longer do and purify his blood, but that ultimately his best chance for survival was a kidney transplant.

He started dialysis in his home, tethered to a machine every day for 12 hours. A year later, he needed dialysis at St. Catharines hospital, four days a week.

"It took everything away from him," says Dave. "I wish I could have switched spots with him."

Michelle doesn't wish David on anyone. "I saw what David went through," she says. "I don't

know what was inside his head, but what I saw was awful." Their hope converged on a transplant.

But David's surgery was cancelled and postponed two times for various reasons, and he died before the third attempt.

St. Catharines nephrologist Dr. Danny Lagroteria cared for David in his final year of life. He is also a director on the David Gregory Foundation, an organization founded by Dave and Michelle to honour their son's memory and raise money and awareness for kidney disease.

"She never really felt like that kidney was hers," she says. "That if it couldn't go to her son, then she needed, not just wanted, it to benefit another person, another family, another community."

Kidney donations can come from living and dead donors.

In Ontario, the Trillium Gift of Life Network matches organs from deceased donors with people waiting for a transplant. It is also part of a network of organ donation organizations across Canada, co-ordinated by Canadian Blood Services, that finds donors from different provinces for difficult-to-match patients.

Dr. Kathryn Tinnack, a transplant nephrologist and the Canadian Blood Services' medical adviser in transplantation.

The most common living

KIDNEY DONATION FACTS

Number of people waiting for a kidney in Ontario: 1,163

Number of kidney donations in Ontario in 2013: 307 (deceased donors) and 209 (living donors)

Source: Trillium Gift of Life Network

donors are family and friends, people known to the patient, she says. Some people are anonymous donors, who are not connected to a specific patient but nonetheless want to donate a kidney.

In addition, Canadian Blood Services also organizes the Living Donor Paired Exchange Registry. If a living donor isn't compatible with their loved one, then both potential donor and recipient are put on a list to be matched with other donors and recipients. In a chain reaction of transplants.

More than 300 transplants have been done through this program since it started in 2008, says Tinnack. One anonymous kidney donor could trigger several transplants.



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